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Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Written statement* submitted by Organisation Internationale pour les pays les moins avancés (OIPMA), a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Deteriorating Prison Conditions in Bahrain

Introduction

Bahrain is witnessing a serious deterioration of the human rights situation, especially after the closure of the democratic space and the failure of the security grip to deal with the movement of peaceful protests. The Bahraini authorities thus paved the way for a series of local legislations that have been introduced or developed, such as: Terrorism Law, the Military Justice Ordinance, which authorize death penalty in more than 60 articles and articles.

According to documented statistics, more than 12,000 Bahraini citizens have been subjected to arbitrary detention since 2011, including more than 4,000 victims of torture and ill-treatment, 968 arbitrarily detained children, 330 women.

The deterioration of prison conditions in Bahrain is the other face of arbitrary detention, where conditions of prisoners in rehabilitation centers do not meet with Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners and is providing a fertile environment for torture and ill-treatment to extract confessions on one hand; and on the other hand to revenge from opposition crowds. 21 methods of torture and ill-treatment are used on 4,000 political prisoners.

The deterioration of prison conditions

- **Torture and ill-treatment of detainees:** Most of detainees, including Nizar AlQari, Adel Am Marzooq, Abduljilil Yousif, and Muhammad Khalil Al Shakhoori, claimed to be subject to intimidation, reprisals, torture and other ill-treatment. For instance, Human rights defender Ebtisam Al Saegh spoke to Amnesty International about the torture she had to endure for seven hours on the 26 May 2017 in the building of the National Security Service in Muharraq. AlSaegh confirmed that officials of the National Security Service subjected her to severe psychological and physical torture, including sexual assault, in retaliation for her work.
- **Neglect of hygiene and maintenance of facilities**: Many prisoners complain of the spread of insect and mosquitoes inside prison corridors and rooms. The political activist AlHalwachi confirmed that detainees are sleeping with insects, especially cockroaches and at meal times they are surprised by the abundance of insects that are there. It should be noted that the annual report of the Bahrain Prison Commission for the year 2014 pointed to the absence of specific procedures for changing mattresses and pillows, that there is difficulty in handing over clothes from the families, and that there is no wardrobe for each detainee to keep his personal belongings A 2013 Annual Report of the Ombudsman also noted that there was a clear lack of maintenance, poor hygiene, as evidenced by a video broadcast by activists on the media reflecting poor hygiene.
- **Overcrowding**: According to the Ombudsman report after visiting the central prison of Jau in September 2013, the capacity of the prison is 1,200, while the number of prisoners during the visit was 1,600. It should be noted that activists on social networking sites have posted a leaked video clip showing prisoners in protest against overcrowding, which they are suffering from.
- **Poor health care:** Despite the high number of detainees, particularly in Jau central prison and Dry Dock prison, only one doctor is available for one seizure per prison; and sometimes there are no doctor at all. The authorities delay or prevent the transfer of detainees to hospitals and external clinics. Where prisoners who wish to receive treatment at a private health center – at their expense – are not enabled to do so. Despite the powers of the prison administration to release prisoners whose presence in prison is a threat to their lives, it often does not work with these powers.
- **Violation of privacy:** Although there are rooms reserved for lawyers to meet their clients, but the presence of a security man with them makes this meeting loses its privacy. The defendants also suffer from a violation of their privacy during the visit of their relatives to them, often accompanied by a security man.
- **Absence of prisoners' access to education:** Although prison authorities have allowed detainees in some cases to continue their studies, they have not established any policies or procedures in order to provide them with opportunities to continue their education. Many prisoners complain of procrastination by the prison administration and lack of education for all prisoners, where procedures also may take a long time.

Dry Dock Prison Unrest

In August 2013, police officers beat a group of defendants who expressed their resentment at the ill-treatment. The defendants refused to go for visits, demanding improvements in the detention center. Other groups accepted to go to the visits, showing bruises on their faces.
While human rights activists assert that the police used tear gas, stun grenades and batons to punish the defendants, resulting in 40 injuries.

In February 2016, the prisoners began another hunger strike, renewing the same demands that they had previously made. Prisoners said they were beaten, put in solitary confinement and forced to mimic the sounds of animals. Prisoners also complained about the presence of the glass barrier during visits.

Jau Central Prison Unrest
The prison has witnessed many disturbances since the popular protests began on February 14, 2011, most notably the so-called "March 10 events" in which more than 1,100 prisoners were subjected to torture and ill-treatment. Unrest was faced by using teargas, stun grenades and shotguns, which led to the injury of dozens. Security forces entered the prison and beat all inmates, and took them out in the open, before being placed in tents. They were also deprived of their prayers and toilets, and were humiliated by forcing them to imitate the sounds of animals, and were cursed, their families and symbols of their country and religion.

According to information and testimonies available, the cause of the unrest is the harassment and ill-treatment prisoners are subjected to, the denial of medical treatment, the harassment during family visits, and the overcrowding of the cells.

Recommendations
1. We appeal for the urgent visit of the International Committee of the Red Cross to inspect the conditions of prisons and detainees
2. Allow special rapporteurs of the United Nations to visit Bahrain immediately, foremost among them the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture
3. Responding to the demands of political prisoners to receive their rights under the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners: the right to adequate health treatment, the right to adequate food, the right to education, the right to practice religious rites and other demands.
4. The Bahraini authorities must recognize the existence of prisoners who have been convicted solely for exercising their freedom of expression or peaceful assembly and work for their immediate release.
5. The Bahraini authorities must respond to the request of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and adopt its views issued since 2012 on the release or compensation of a number of victims.
6. The Bahraini authorities must repeal the articles of the Penal Code and the Law on Gatherings that criminalize freedom of expression and restrict the right to peaceful assembly, or modify them to imply with international law
7. The Bahraini authorities shall repeal or amend the articles contained in the Terrorism Act and the Nationality Law that is employed to punish dissidents.
8. Training all prison guards and security forces on proper ways to deal with detainees and protests inside the prison.
9. Accountability of officials, security personnel and any security forces for the torture and ill-treatment of prisoners, especially in events that have witnessed severe disturbances.
10. Prepare clean and new buildings to ensure the safety and wellbeing of detainees, and launch a contract with a cleaning and maintenance company to do what is necessary.
11. Enabling prisoners to meet their relatives or lawyers in a confidential and private manner.
12. Establish a clear mechanism to ensure that education at all levels – including higher education – is provided to all prisoners and work on facilitating this.
13. And to improve the clinics of the prisons so as to ensure that the detainee is properly treated and allow detainees to be treated at external medical centers if appropriate treatment is not available at the clinic or the governmental public hospitals in Bahrain.